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SENSITIVE
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DS/TIA, DS/IP/WHA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATION AT EMBASSY CARACAS

REF: CARACAS 1332

¶1. (SBU) On 09/23/2008, a group of approximately 50 demonstrators gathered outside the main entrance of Embassy Caracas. Post officials received advance notice of the protest and in light of increased anti-U.S. rhetoric from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV), decided it was prudent to cancel Non-Immigrant Visa (NIV) operations for the day.

¶2. (SBU) The demonstration took place at 11:00 and lasted approximately one hour. Demonstrators carried flags and banners identifying themselves as supporters of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV). Oscar Figueroa, PCV Secretary General, and Yul Jabour, A PVC National Assembly deputy, led the demonstrators. RSO had been made aware of the planned demonstration over a week in advance, and had requested police support and extra guard force coverage for the event. Local municipal police provided a timely contingent of about 10 motorcycle officers; however, the small crowd was able to block vehicle entry/exit into the main entrance for the duration of the protest. Demonstrators shouted anti-American slogans and presented a paper with similar Yankee-go-home content to an American officer before departing the area. The demonstration was peaceful and ended without incident.

¶3. (SBU) Given the venomous anti-American rhetoric from the BRV, recent expulsion of the Ambassador, and planned demonstration in front of Embassy Caracas, Post elected to suspend consular NIV services on 09/23/2008. That morning, an unknown person had tossed a tear gas grenade into the compound of Globovision, an opposition media outlet. Concern for the safety of visa applicants made sending NIV applicants home for the day both prudent and necessary to avoid potential security incidents. Applicants who arrived at the embassy seeking visas were told to return on 09/25/2008 for visa services. Public Affairs provided local press reasons for the closure, and a 09/24/2008 article in the local daily "El Universal" was entitled "The Closure of U.S. Visas in Caracas is not Dismissed." Although extra security personnel were in place to handle the large numbers of visa applicants being denied entry, there were no incidents or security problems as the result of the closure.

¶4. (SBU) MFA USA Desk Officer Marie Borregales called A/PolCouns 09/24/2008 to follow up on press reports of the Embassy's closing of the NIV section on 09/23/2008. She stressed that the MFA took very seriously the security concerns raised by Charge in his 09/19/2008 meeting with MFA Director of North American Affairs Yaneth Arocha (reftel). Borregales said the MFA contacted the Director of Citizen Security in the Caracas Mayor's Office, who in turn, alerted the Metropolitan Police to be responsive to Embassy's security concerns. Asked whether she anticipated that Venezuela's special police (DISIP) would be more responsive in the future, Borregales said that MFA did not contact DISIP.

